



*Office of Public Affairs
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AMBASSADOR MCCORMICK'S REMARKS
MEDALS CEREMONY, US EMBASSY

Let me begin by welcoming our distinguished guests from the New Zealand Defense Force, their families, and of course the Defense Minister, the Honorable Phil Goff.

This afternoon I am honored to be able to present decorations to a number of New Zealand military personnel for their exemplary service during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and in the continuing effort to help reconstruct that country.

In everything I hear about the tremendous work being done by the New Zealand Defense Force in Afghanistan it is clear that the New Zealand troops have an extraordinary ability to establish relationships with the Afghan people. I am reminded of the words of Abraham Lincoln when he said: "I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends."

As you listen to each of these citations being read out, you will hear words such as 'exceptional' and 'outstanding' used to describe the service of the military personnel here today. This ceremony helps to highlight how these individual contributions combine to create a bigger picture of the truly transformational role that New Zealand is playing in Afghanistan and around the world.

Kiwi engineers from the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team are helping to build a school, police stations, and a vital new hospital wing. Their work has been used as a model by many other countries. The NZDF contribution to Combined Joint Task Forces shows New Zealand's commitment to the shared goals of the international community. All in all, the work of New Zealand's armed forces in Afghanistan demonstrates just what a potent combination the Kiwi 'can-do' attitude and professional military excellence is.

But today's award of the US Army Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star to these individual New Zealanders does more than show US appreciation for their fine work. It also emphasizes the dedication which our two nations -- together with approximately forty other countries -- have shown to the people of Afghanistan. Without countless individual contributions the international community's shared goal of fostering security, stability and development in Afghanistan -- and, ultimately, making the world a safer place for us all -- would come to nothing.

I am also aware of the sacrifices made by the families of service personnel, and I would like to express the appreciation of the people of the United States for your contributions. You, too, are helping to bring the new freedoms now opening up for the people of Afghanistan.

Let me close by echoing the sentiments on each of these citations: the expertise, innovation, and sheer professionalism of today's recipients do indeed, reflect tremendous credit on them, their families, and the New Zealand Defence Force and this great country.